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ABSTRACT

The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE), which represents 65,000 academic staff working in further and higher education (FHE) institutions across the United Kingdom, reviewed the current state of post-16 education and training in the United Kingdom and submitted its views on how the system should be improved. NATFHE's submission focused on a new framework encompassing structures at every level of government. Key recommendations for action that were included in the submission are as follows: (1) give coherence to post-16 education and training by developing a whole new framework built on accountability and entitlement to lifelong learning; (2) underpin the framework by the principle of subsiduarity that planning, regulation, accountability, funding, and delivery should occur at the point nearest the learner and nearest delivery; (3) make local communities the cornerstones of the new framework, with local lifelong learning panels and plans; (4) move speedily to pass legislation to embed a statutory framework for entitlement to learning, including individual rights to paid educational leave; (5) conduct an independent review of pay and conditions for FE staff to reverse the current chaos in employment matters; and (6) ensure that the new framework provides mechanisms at every level for the views of staff and their representatives. (MN)

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NATFHE

The University & College Lecturers' Union

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A New Shape for Post-16 Education and Training

Submission to the Department for Education and Employment Review of Local and National Arrangements for Lifelong Learning, Skills and Workforce Development: Outcome of the TEC Review

May 1999

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FOREWORD

The government's decision to extend the scope of the current review of the future for Training and Enterprise Councils to encompass the whole of post-school education and training is like a breath of fresh spring air to thousands of college lecturers, trainers and adult education tutors.

Not before time. The current state of affairs - it's hardly a "system" these days - is a sorry mess. Many NATFHE members will regret that our warnings went unheeded for so long.

We take absolutely no comfort in any sentiment of telling you so. Far, far better if the action had been taken to prevent what we have been so sad to see come to pass - a handful of colleges and their senior officers allowed to turn to fraud and corruption, wasteful competition as providers indulge in market mania, students turned into 'units', and rock bottom staff morale.

Students have suffered, lecturers have borne the brunt - we've lost the jobs and skills of 20,000 lecturers - and communities feel cut off from having their say.

It's a wonder that post-school education and training has survived, but it has, with the majority of colleges and their staff endeavouring to maintain standards and extend the joy and value of learning to hundreds of thousands of students.

It's that bedrock which NATFHE wants to see the government build on in shaping a new framework for post-16 education and training. Our submission restates the values and vision our union wants to see, and offers some key approaches for action:

- a whole new framework to give coherence to post-16 education and training, built on accountability and entitlement to lifelong learning;
- this framework to be underpinned by the principle of subsiduarity, with planning, regulation, accountability, funding and delivery taking place at the point nearest to the learner;
- the local community as the cornerstone of the new framework, with local lifelong learning panels and plans;
- a speedy move to legislation to embed a statutory framework for entitlement to learning, including an individual right to paid educational leave;
- an independent review of pay and conditions for staff in further education to reverse the current chaos in employment matters;
- any new framework must provide mechanisms, at every level, for the views of staff and their representatives.

Paul Mackney
General Secretary, NATFHE

1 INTRODUCTION

NATFHE-The University & College Lecturers' Union - represents 65,000 academic staff working in higher education institutions and universities, further education and specialist colleges, adult education services and prison education. Our members work at the heart of lifelong learning, and will be profoundly affected by the outcome of this review.

We welcome the opportunity to submit our views on post-16 education and training. We hope that the review will lead to radical changes which begin to redress 150 years of fragmentation and disunity in the system, and help to establish the vision of lifelong learning and the learning society that the Secretary of State for Education and Employment set out in his foreword to the green paper, The Learning Age.

NATFHE shares that vision of the learning society, which we welcome alongside the post-16 curriculum reforms and the recommendations made by the Kennedy, Fryer and Moser reports. The union has also supported many other government initiatives on lifelong learning, such the University for Industry, the expanded funding for further and higher education, the new funds for adult, community and union learning, and local lifelong learning development partnerships and plans.

Our union has been one of the few national organisations in post-16 education and training that has, over the past few years, consistently argued for a "seamless robe" of lifelong learning to be embedded in a framework of institutions and provision. Such a framework must encourage participation and achievement, not act as a barrier. The current post-16 system is fragmented and incoherent, lacking clear progression routes and broad learning programmes. There has been a long-standing inequity of esteem and funding between the different routes and modes of learning for both young people and adults. NATFHE believes profoundly that this current system cannot deliver the government's objectives on lifelong learning.

NATFHE wishes to see a coherent and unified system of post-school education and training that addresses the competition and social inclusion agendas, and widens participation and equality of education and training opportunities in formal and structured settings, in the workplace and in the community.

The changes resulting from this review must encompass every aspect of post-16 education and training. They must also be co-ordinated with developments now taking place in post-school education and training in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Much of this submission restates NATFHE's policy outlined in the union's submissions to the Fryer Committee, the Commons Education and Employment Select Committee Inquiry on further education, the consultations on *The Learning Age, Qualifying for Success, Accountability in Further Education,* and to the Dearing Committee on Higher Education.

2 UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

NATFHE considers that any new system of post-16 education and training must be based on a number of key principles. These are that:

- access to learning is a fundamental human right and that lifelong learning is essential to equal opportunities. Access should not be limited by age, sex, class, religion, ethnic or national origin, actual or perceived mental or physical ability. Following the Macpherson Report, post-school education and training providers need to investigate and tackle any patterns of racism embedded in their service;
- the purposes of post-16 education and training include: the preparation of young people for work, further study and further and higher education; the delivery of vocational skills and qualifications to young people and adults; the delivery of intermediate skills and qualifications; updating skills and knowledge in the workforce; second chance education for adults; and the personal development and enrichment of young people and adults;
- any system of post-16 education and training must be based on publicly-funded institutions and provision - the state has a duty to ensure that all provision is delivered to a high quality and to high standards;
- any system must be based on people's entitlements to the necessary education and training to give equality of opportunities and choice, and ensure social justice - this entitlement should be to free education and training to at least level 3;
- the curriculum must be dynamic and equip young people and adults with the knowledge and skills they will need for future prosperity and individual fulfilment - there should be parity of esteem between academic and vocational education and training, and individual and collective opportunities to learn;
- the post-16 system should be enshrined in legislation and no longer left to voluntary efforts on the part of government, its agencies and employers;
- the system should be accountable and democratic, and recognise the contribution made by its staff;
- it should be underpinned by the principle of subsiduarity - that is, planning, regulation, accountability, funding and delivery should take place nearest to the learner and the point of delivery, consistent with practicability and effectiveness;
- there should be fair and transparent funding;
- any system must include not only entitlement to learning, but also to all the support necessary to learn.

3 ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

NATFHE believes that there are a number of key issues and some problems that need to be addressed in the review. These include:

- accountability and democracy. Over the last six years parts of post-16 education and training have been troubled by serious incidents of malpractice, maladministration and, sometimes, outright fraud. At the heart of these problems lies a democratic deficit which does not allow for proper accountability for the use of public funds by some institutions. This must be remedied;
- the links between quality of provision in post-school education and the salaries and conditions of service of staff delivering these programmes and services;
- the possible tension between the government's agenda on widening participation and the ways that the agenda for raising standards and quality in FE colleges is being implemented;
- the problem of lack of match of geographic boundaries between the different institutions and services, such as FE colleges, LEAs, TECs, local learning partnerships, Employment Service and other agencies;
- the inclusion of higher education: NATFHE strongly urges the inclusion of higher education in this review. This is in line with our principle of a "seamless robe" of post-school education and lifelong learning, and lowering of the barriers between further and higher education, as well as the consideration of the FE-HE interface in the Dearing report. There are already extensive collaborative links between higher education institutions and further education providers - such as the franchising of HE courses to FE colleges, validation and accreditation of FE programmes by HE institutions, and proposed mergers between colleges and HE institutions. Over 180,000 students study HE programmes in FE colleges, with more to come under the government's expansion plans. Some HE institutions deliver important elements of FE programmes. The University for Industry will cover both sectors. HE needs to be included within this review to complete the picture, and avoid future problems and disruption;
- the need to obtain real employer commitment, especially from small and medium enterprises.

4 A NEW FRAMEWORK - NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL STRUCTURES

NATFHE's views on the new structure for post-16 education and training are based on our underpinning principles.

We advocate a unified structure encompassing formal education and training provision in FE colleges, publicly-funded provision by external institutions and private training providers, workplace learning and community learning. School-based 16 to 18 provision could also be included (see 4.3a).

The system we envisage would mean the abolition of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and the distribution of their functions to a new national funding and planning body. Their enterprise functions are already in the process of being transferred to the newly established Small Business Service. NATFHE proposes the transfer of funding for training, currently within the TECs' remit, to the new body, which would include: national traineeships; modern apprenticeships; work-based training for adults; and responsibility for the New Deal.

The new national body would be responsible for the strategic direction, planning, regulation and core funding of all post-16 education and training, no matter where it takes place - in formal and structured settings, in the workplace and in the community. Only such a unified and coherent framework and system can overcome the years of fragmentation and incoherence that have been the hallmark of English post-16 education and training.

The new system should have at least three foci, to be reflected through all its structures:

- workplace learning;
- formal education and training provision;
- community learning.

These foci should have separate sub-committees at each level of the new framework that would draw together the main stakeholders, identify the main issues and plan provision.

NATFHE supports the inclusion of schools' work in the new system, but would advise against any split 16-18 and adult provision to avoid some of the existing fragmentation.

Each of the proposed levels of the new framework - national, regional and local - would have functions and responsibilities for the appropriate level of strategic planning and direction, regulation, advice, support and core funding.

4.1 The national level

Parliament should be the body which sets the policy direction, strategies and priorities for post-16 education and training, and to which the new system is ultimately accountable.

At least three government departments will be involved with the new framework: the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE); the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), through its responsibilities for local government and newly established Regional Development Agencies (RDAs); and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), through its responsibility for the newly created Small Business Service. The DfEE should be the senior department responsible for the new framework.

The Home Office currently has responsibility for education and training in prisons and young offender institutions; NATFHE urges that this responsibility be transferred to the DfEE and the remit of the new national funding and planning body. This move would be extremely timely - prison education has suffered from severe cuts to funding and the disruption of tendering contracts; meanwhile 60 per cent of prisoners are not achieving even level 1 in basic skills, even though education and training plays such an important role in preventing re-offending.

A new national funding and planning body for England, responsible to the DfEE, would have responsibility for national strategic planning and direction, regulation and core funding of all post-16 education and training provision. This would include the functions and roles of the FEFC (less the FEFC Inspectorate, see section 9), the TECs, non-schedule 2 work in local authorities, and publicly-funded workplace training. NATFHE would also include New Deal provision and work-based training for adults.

This national funding and planning body would be responsible for:

- national level planning, regulation and financing of the provision of post-compulsory education;
- adequate and sufficient provision of post-compulsory education and training;
- providing core funding for all learning programmes leading to the achievement of the lifelong learning targets in the national targets;
- guidance and curriculum support for these programmes;
- widening participation and achievement;
- implementation of the national skills strategy and the fulfilment of the national targets for education and training;
- funding basic skills programmes, including those in the workplace and community;
- all aspects of learner financial support.

The national funding and planning body will maintain links to National Training Organisations (NTOs) and other industry structures to obtain accurate information on sectoral education and training needs. It will work with the NTOs to fulfil their plans on education and training for their particular sector.

The new body should also be responsible for the collection, publication and dissemination of data and statistics on all aspects of post-16 education and training, including programme costs and staffing.

NATFHE supports a single funding body to cover all of post-school education and training, including higher education. The recent Quinquennial Review of the FEFC called for closer links

between the Further Education Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council (England). In Wales and Scotland, the further and higher education funding councils already share a joint secretariat; this is a valuable first step that should be taken in the new English framework.

4.2 The regional level

Any framework for post-16 education and training must have a regional dimension. Much of FE now has a regional or sub-regional remit, and workplace training has to have a regional remit. The development of Regional Development Agencies, with their core strategic function of incorporating skills strategies into regional economic developments, emphasises the need for a regional dimension in the new post-16 framework. One of the RDA's important instruments in implementing the skills agenda will be their skills action plans. These will analyse skill requirements, identify gaps in provision, and set priorities for action with partners. A regional dimension to the new post-16 structural framework will be important to the RDA's work in implementing the skills agenda. Increasing amounts of European funding for training will also be coming through at the regional level.

NATFHE supports regional funding and planning councils (RFPCs) through which the national funding and planning body would direct funding. As with all the other levels, this regional level would be made up of representatives of the principal stakeholders - employers, providers, local government, the voluntary sector, trade unions, staff and learners. Democratic accountability will initially be ensured through the elected local authority representatives and, later, through regional assemblies, if these are set up.

The RFPCs would act as regional lifelong learning partnerships, working in liaison with other regional bodies, particularly RDAs, the University for Industry and higher education institutions. The RFPCs will take an overview of the balance and focus of further education and training, especially the adequacy and sufficiency of facilities, and will take action to address regional skills shortages. They will secure effective mechanisms to support initiatives that do not fall easily within the remit of local lifelong learning partnerships. Again there will be sub-committees to reflect the foci described above. The RFPCs might have some funding for regional pump-priming and initiatives. Their detailed remit will be to:

- review the work of local lifelong learning partnerships and identify gaps in provision;
- allocate funds to local learning partnerships;
- act as liaison for EU regional funding for education and training;
- liaise with RDAs;
- advise the national funding and planning body on funding and strategic planning;
- liaise with HE.

Some of the current functions of the TECs, for example, Bargaining for Skills projects, could be relocated at regional level, to the RFC or RDA.

4.3 The local level

The local level will be the key level for both delivery and accountability of post-16 education and training. NATFHE envisages local lifelong learning partnerships as the principal instrument of the new framework. Based on current developments, these partnerships will be strengthened by the inclusion of social partners. Local lifelong learning partnerships would be the principal conduit for the strategic planning and funding of local provision. NATFHE sees these partnerships as the local Education and Training Boards we proposed in our evidence to the Dearing Review of post-16 curriculum and qualifications - bodies which would develop tertiary education and training charters, setting out local people's entitlement to post-school education and training, and implementing plans to fulfil this.

All local providers - FE colleges, private training providers using public funds, external institutions, the voluntary sector, employers, careers and guidance services, local government and school 6th forms - would sit on local lifelong learning partnerships, as would New Deal providers, if different from the above, and the youth service. They would also include social partners, such as representatives from local authorities, the trade unions and staff organisations, and the learners themselves.

The partnerships would draw up lifelong learning development plans. These will include the planning of tertiary provision between the various providers, eliminating the wasteful duplication and competition that has been such a feature of post-16 education in recent years. The partnerships will undertake needs analysis and set participation targets. They will have the power to direct providers to make provision needed to meet the local development plan. The local partnerships will approve plans for local advice and guidance.

The partnerships will also review the operation of learning in and for the workplace, the effectiveness of workplace learning plans, and the coherence, adequacy and sufficiency of provision.

They will liaise with local University for Industry hubs, and with other local partnerships - such as those to guide local childcare strategies. They will have particularly strong links to the local partnerships envisaged by the Lane Report on FE student financial support, becoming local learner financial support partnerships with responsibility for the development of local schemes involving individual learning accounts.

The links between the local authority and the local lifelong learning partnerships will be the principal avenue for local accountability, with local authorities - the only elected body - as the lead agency in the partnership.

4.3a The position of schools

To be truly comprehensive and coherent, a new post-16 system must include provision made by schools. NATFHE's commitment to a tertiary system recognises that both young people and their parents need and want a multiplicity of choices of where to continue to study and learn. While some young people may want and require a change of setting to study beyond 16, for others a move of institution can be an unwelcome disruption. The aim of any new system must

be to offer broad, relevant programmes and routes to study and to qualification, with a variety of learning approaches. This must be delivered in a cost-effective manner, without wasteful duplication of programmes brought about by institutional competition - itself often driven by financial considerations.

Such a system must be based on fair and transparent funding, and not favour any route, institution, programme of learning or mode of attendance above any other.

Schools' provision should, therefore, be included in the structural arrangements of any new framework. However, because of the amount of changes that LEAs, schools, teachers and pupils have been subjected to over recent years, and the complex pattern of schools' provision, including post-16 education, there should be caution in how fast schools are brought in to any new system. A minimum level of integration with the new system must be around funding - the funding for all post-16 education should be based on the same principles and, as far as is practicable, the same methodology. This should not mean a levelling down to the resource levels of FE and TEC provision, but a levelling up to the level of resources that schools receive for their post-16 provision.

If the new funding body has responsibility for core funding of schools' post-16 provision, then the conduit for the funding must be the local education authority. This would ensure their direct accountability to an elected body. It would also add to the coherence of the local framework, and the ability of the local partnership to plan provision particularly for the 16 to 18 age group.

5 ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEMOCRACY

NATFHE believes that a fundamental principle for any new system is that it is fully accountable at every level for its use of public funds, and the policies it pursues, on post-16 education and training. We have identified where the lines of public accountability must run.

Equally, we have stressed the importance of social partnership in a new system, including a place for the staff who deliver post-16 education and training. The representatives of the various partners must be selected by open and transparent means.

NATFHE's emphasis on accountability and democracy in any new system is based on the experience in post-school education and training over the last decade. Those years have seen the FE colleges and TECs placed in the hands of unelected individuals whose accountability was questionable. Effective and representative governance of post-16 education and training providers is now essential to the pursuit of their objectives, and to ensure efficient and transparent management of public funds.

Incorporation of FE colleges brought in a form of governance that created a gulf between the college corporations and their local communities and their staff. Although many college managers and governors undertake their responsibilities in an excellent manner, there have been a number of unfortunate, and well-publicised, incidents of malpractice, corruption and sleaze. There has also been a widespread ethos of confrontational management. The forms of governance and management brought in with the incorporation of college in 1993 do not provide the accountability and democratic working to be expected from publicly-funded bodies.

NATFHE welcomed and fully supported the proposals for Accountability in Further Education and we now await their implementation. The diminution of the role of "independent" governors and their privileged position can only help college democracy, and the inclusion as of right of student and staff governors will ensure that voices from within the college are heard. The government's moves to ensure more open decision making in colleges, provision for annual reports, clear and open procedures for the appointment of senior staff, and institution codes of conduct for the appointment of governors, their conduct and interests are right and proper.

We welcome these moves and we add to them the recommendation of the recent Quinquennial Report for stronger powers of intervention by the FEFC where colleges are causing concern - any new national body should have such power to intervene.

Despite the changes about to be introduced as a result of Accountability in FE, representation on the boards and governing bodies of local institutions and providers will need to be looked again if a new system of post-16 education and training does emerge from this review. As we have previously argued, the business section of college corporations should be renamed the "employment" interest and include a trade union representative. This argument is even stronger if TECs were to be abolished - almost all have a trade union director. Very few colleges currently have trade union governors; corporations and boards of the providers will need to have trade union representatives if they are truly to represent social partners.

Local adult education services would also benefit in having delegated powers from their LEAs, exercised by boards of governors. This was the case in many LEA adult education services before incorporation of FE colleges.

NATFHE has always been concerned by the curious arrangements concerning TECs. They are private companies, yet almost wholly dependent on public funds. They control important and large sums of public money provided for training infra-structure, yet there is little accountability to the communities they serve. Their activities, including the selection of their board members, have often been clouded in secrecy. The actions of a minority of TEC-funded providers have been a cause for grave concern, lowering the credibility and public standing of all training providers and of vocational qualifications. We support the measures announced in the Secretary of State for Education and Employment's letter to TEC Chairs of 10 March to make the TECs more accountable. These measures are necessary and will ensure that the TECs are more accountable until their functions are redirected to other stakeholders in the new framework.

6 RESTORING STAFF CONFIDENCE

Over the last six years colleges have explored the agenda of competition and survival. In the process, they have lost the focus on the communities they were created to serve, and massively undermined the motivation and morale of the staff who provide the service. In this time staff have experienced a litany of morale-sapping policies, both within individual colleges and across the sector as a whole. While staff have already delivered huge expansion, and have been the key whistleblowers in exposing the malpractice, excess and failure within the system, their professional status, conditions and pay have been systematically undermined. In short, on employment matters, the system is in chaos.

NATFHE sees no possibility for the government's vision of lifelong learning to be realised fully without staff regaining the confidence that their efforts will be recognised. New structures must also re-assure them that their voice will be less easily silenced when speaking up to protect their students, their institutions and the public purse.

The present picture is as follows:

- **Pay structures**
  National pay scales have become meaningless with the wide scale introduction of banding and spot salaries only exacerbating this. The profession's national identity, one of the bulwarks to quality, is being systematically eroded.
- **Pay levels**
  Pay levels for teaching staff have fallen by 4% in real terms since incorporation, exacerbating the gap with comparable professions within and outside education.
- **The failure to collect staffing statistics**
  No national, comprehensive data exists on staffing to allow informed strategic choice on staffing matters.
- **Management by conflict**
  Conditions of service in many colleges are so poor that they are undermining all attempts to attain quality standards. In many cases, employers have refused to discuss the setting of limits on teaching hours, even at levels far in excess of what is reasonable or supportive of a quality based service.
- **The most casualised job in the country**
  The lecturing workforce is now casualised to a higher degree than any other sector of the economy - an estimated 25% of all teaching is delivered by temporary or agency staff. The turnover of lecturers is hugely disruptive to the students and, again, quality is undermined.
- **Investment in professional development**
  Professional development policies vary markedly between institutions; the sector as a whole provides inadequate provision and this must be addressed if the aims, embodied in the launch of FENTO, are to be realised.

Workable and affordable solutions to these problems will be a significant task, requiring the inclusion of all interested parties. A first step must be the collection and analysis of comprehensive, accurate staffing statistics, including pay. At present no body carries out this

function and it is of great concern that the spending of 70% of the public money given to the sector on staffing costs can't be scrutinised.

Current bargaining arrangements for staff in post-16 education and training have not delivered stability. In the LEA-controlled sector, national bargaining has ceased. Some local agreements exist but, all too often, matters are resolved in an *ad hoc* manner.

A majority of the incorporated colleges now ignore national pay scales and have introduced banding and other pay strategies which have created internal inequalities - and could be a 'time bomb' on the question of equal pay. Meanwhile, a high proportion of colleges show no intention of setting reasonable levels of temporary staff and/or do not wish to agree terms and conditions with their staff.

Clearly, in employment matters, the post-16 sector is chaos; despite the best efforts of staff, the quality of education and training which students may reasonably expect is being critically undermined.

NATFHE believes that we now need a formal, one-off review of staffing issues in further education, including pay and conditions. Such a review should be conducted by an independent, government-nominated chair, and present its recommendations to the government.

7 WORKPLACE LEARNING

Workplace learning should mean the totality of learning that takes place for, and in, the workplace, including on-the-job and off-the-job training. Within such a definition, it is important to recognise the importance and contribution that some employers make to education and training.

Unfortunately, many do not, and this is particularly true of small and medium enterprises who are now such an important part of the economy. Changes in the workforce over recent years have emphasised the lack of equal opportunities for workplace education and training. Numerous national surveys, including those by the National Adult Learners' Survey and by NIACE, show that workplace training fails to reach women, workers from black and ethnic minorities, part-time, temporary and casual workers, as well as those employees with few previous qualifications.

If the country is to achieve the Learning Age and have a truly comprehensive system of post-16 education and training, this situation must be transformed. One of the main reasons for the drawbacks to the current system of workplace training is its reliance on voluntary efforts by employers. A new system of post-16 education and training in the workplace must have a legislative foundation, with an entitlement to paid education leave for all employees.

There was much merit in the recommendations of the National Advisory Group on Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (the Fryer Report) for a statutory framework for workplace learning, similar to that which has underpinned so successfully health and safety at work. For workplace learning this could consist of an obligation for organisations to produce policy statements setting out their commitment to workplace learning, and how this may be best supported. Such a statement would be the product of workplace learning committees made up of representatives from both trade unions and management. These committees would be responsible for developing and monitoring progress to achieving the objectives of the policy statements. The government could issue a Code of Practice with guidance on development plans and the resources available to support their activities.

Investors for People (IiP) has been an important spur to some organisations taking training and lifelong learning seriously. The standards for IiP status need to be reviewed and made more consistent. The TEC's role in IiP should be transferred to a regional body, the RDAs or new regional funding and planning bodies.

Some workplace training will have to be organised and delivered regionally and nationally through NTOs and specialist providers - another argument for a regional tier for the new structures of post-16 education and training.

NATFHE has always had strong reservations about certain aspects of the New Deal programmes for the long-term unemployed. These include: the coercive nature of the scheme; the funding of the full-time education and training option; and continuing flaws in what such schemes offer black and ethnic minority participants, and equality of opportunity to access all the options available. The New Deal should become part of the framework of the new system, with particular attention to the equal opportunities issues.

8 FUNDING

Further and adult education and training, particularly programmes of learning, have always been underfunded in relation to compulsory and higher education. This chronic underfunding has been exacerbated by different funding regimes for different parts of the current system - some have benefited from more generous funding than others. Such a system is both inequitable and unjust.

Any new system must have sufficient resources to make adequate, sufficient and high quality provision to the highest possible standards. There should be a levelling up to the best funded parts of the current system. Adequate resources must be made available for both revenue and capital projects. Capital funds are especially important in post-16 education and training. It has all too often been housed in those buildings that no-one else in education and training wants or requires. It is essential that post-16 education and training keeps pace with the industries it serves and their technological requirements if it is to fulfil its vocational functions.

NATFHE proposes a common funding regime for all post-school education and training. This should be simple, transparent, equitable, fair, cost-effective, and support learning. There will need to be sufficient resources to meet the administrative needs of servicing any funding methodology that is used; resources should not be diverted from learning to support servicing of the funding methodology.

Within a common funding regime it may not be necessary to have a single funding stream for all post-16 work; as long as there is equity between the different streams, different parts of the system - for example, formal and structured provision of programmes or workplace learning - could be separate. Over-reliance on output-related funding must be avoided - the TEC experience of funding training shows that this can lead to fraud and work against equal opportunities.

Funding should not be tied solely to the acquisition of qualifications, as with FEFC funding, but should encompass schedule and non-schedule 2 work.

The adult and community education work funded by LEAs has been under even more severe pressure than that in colleges and TECs. This is partly because the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, while making it a duty for local authorities to secure adequate facilities for part-time adult education, failed to define adequacy. The legislation bringing in a new system of post-school education and training must now define adequacy.

The results of the current system of local adult and community education are clear from the 1999 Audit Commission review of local authority performance indicators; this shows enormous variations between local authorities on what they spent on adult and community education. NATFHE supports the proposal from NIACE that local authorities should prepare lifelong learning development plans which, when approved by the lifelong learning partnerships, would release hypothecated funding for adult, youth and community education. Local authorities would continue to receive money via the Standard Spending Assessment, but only

have authorisation to release hypothecated funds after receipt of approval from the DfEE; this would be triggered by the local partnership approval.

Given the uneven distribution of workplace training among UK companies, NATFHE urges the re-introduction of sector training levies to equalise the costs of training among all employers. While the previous experience of industrial training levies in the 1970s had its limitations, they did increase the amount of industrial training. It would be possible to avoid some of the earlier bureaucratic pitfalls; for example, there could be exemptions for organisations which gained Investors in People status. Industrial training levies would introduce new money into workplace training and ensure that all employers, not just the good ones, invested in training their workforces.

9 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance and inspection regimes are yet another area where fragmentation leads to duplication and waste. A number of different inspection regimes operate in post-school education and training. OFSTED has responsibilities for school 6th forms and LEA adult education services. The FEFC Inspectorate has responsibility for FE sector colleges and FEFC funded work in external institutions. TEC-funded provision comes under the auspices of the Training Standards Council. The various bodies awarding qualifications often have their own quality assurance procedures.

Rather than the harmonisation of the many inspection and quality regimes proposed in The Learning Age, NATFHE would urge the establishment of a single, independent inspection body to cover the core education and training business of colleges, private training providers using public funds, the Employment Service programmes (if these do remain with that Service), local authority adult and community education, and schools 6th forms.

The new unified inspection service for post-school education could have different streams to match the different foci referred to above. However, these streams would need to have common inspection criteria and performance indicators.

We believe that the new service should follow the example of the FEFC Inspectorate, rather than OFSTED, and seek to inspect and offer advice and support to providers in meeting high standards of quality and excellence.

10 CURRICULUM

Although not the primary purpose of this review, NATFHE believes that the curriculum and qualifications for post-16 education cannot be ignored. The quality of post-16 provision has been affected by unnecessary, costly and ineffective competition. Learners, parents and employers have been presented with a bewildering pattern of institutions, tracks and qualifications. This system too often produces low performance, with poor retention, attainment and progression rates. The curriculum and programmes to be offered by the new system still need reform and change, despite the moves recently announced by the government.

We believe that the way forward lies in a unified and comprehensive education and qualification system built on co-operative and collaborative frameworks which unite all post-16 education and training provision. Such a system must take into account the needs of adult learners as well as 16-19 year olds.

Such a framework will greatly assist access, participation, progression and achievement. Learners should be able to follow different routes and modes of learning towards an overarching certificate of qualification at different levels. Such a qualification could take the form of a diploma or 'signature' qualification made up of agreed packages of accredited learning.

A coherent and balanced curriculum on offer in a local community needs to be based on joint and strategic planning, and co-operation and collaboration between providers. NATFHE advocates a new 'tertiary education charter' setting out local entitlement to post-16 education and training, such as:

- the range of programmes, eg. A levels, GNVQs and vocational qualifications;
- the combinations of programmes that would be possible;
- the modes of provision on offer, eg. full- and part-time, distance and open learning, evening only;
- the opening-up and mapping of clear progression routes, with clear pre-requisites;
- procedures in the event of a programme/course becoming financially unviable;
- the range of abilities for which provision exists, and meeting gaps that are not catered for locally;
- the support which is available for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;
- links with both 11 to 16 provision, and with higher education.

Progress towards developments in curriculum and qualifications could be achieved through local networks for CAT schemes involving schools, colleges, universities and employers. As long as all local networks use the same 'technology' for defining achievement and determining level and credit value, local initiatives need not run counter to the eventual aim of a single national system. Local learning partnerships could be a good basis for these networks. Underpinning such an approach is the need to establish a common language for defining achievement. This would involve extending the practice of setting outcomes for all routes and qualifications. Such outcomes must be delineated in plain language so that all - teachers, employers and learners - can recognise what is being described. Such learning outcomes will need to be based on coherent learning units which should be small enough to promote

flexibility, yet large enough for assessment to be manageable and cost-effective. Alongside units, guideline syllabuses should be provided so that deliverers do not need to design programmes on the basis of outcomes alone.

There should be a post-16 entitlement to publicly-funded further learning to Level 3, as proposed by the Kennedy Report. The entitlement for 16 to 18 year olds should be to a curriculum that offers breadth, depth and the opportunity for specialisation. This entitlement should be matched in workplace learning with an entitlement to a minimum amount of paid educational leave.

Despite recent moves to rationalise the numbers of awarding and examination bodies, NATFHE sees little merit in maintaining an artificial market in examinations, assessments and qualifications. There should be a continuing reduction in the number of awarding bodies, without a reduction in the range of syllabuses and qualifications on offer. This reduction of examination and awarding bodies could fit into the new system through regional structures for awards and examinations, responsible to a national body for qualifications.

The curriculum and programmes offered by a new system of post-16 education and training must be underpinned by adequate and sufficient, independent and impartial education advice and guidance services. These should cover the needs of young people and adults. They should be able to give on-going educational and career advice. Careers services should operate under the auspices of the local lifelong learning partnerships. NATFHE welcomes and supports the recent government initiative on adult advice and guidance services, but believes that all educational advice and guidance services need strengthening, and greater focus on learner needs.

While welcoming the University for Industry, NATFHE urges that it takes account of, and builds on, existing expertise in the institutions and current providers. The Ufl should not be over-reliant on new information and communication technology (ICT) - while this may liberate and help some learners, it may act as yet another barrier to participation and achievement to others. ICT should be a supplement, not a substitute, for good teaching.

11 TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Should a new system of post-16 education and training emerge from this review, the arrangements to move from the current system to the new one will be important. Given the amount of change already experienced in both initial education and post-16 education and training - and with further changes already planned to the national curriculum and post-16 curriculum and qualifications - any further change must be fully owned by all the stakeholders involved. Changes in organisational and funding arrangements must be co-ordinated with any curriculum changes.

And, given the historical underfunding of post-16 education and training, it is important that any changes are properly funded and do not shift resources from teaching and learning to organisation and administration.

NATFHE urges that any changes are introduced by stages. For example, a first stage might bring together the elements of post-16 education and training in FE colleges, TEC provision and adult and community education. This stage should also firmly establish the local learning partnerships as instruments of co-ordination and planning, and set out the broad lines of the common funding system. Later stages would see further integration of schools' work in post-16 education and training.

12 CONCLUSION

The need for a review of staffing issues

NATFHE believes that, if the government's vision of lifelong learning is to be realised, then there is an urgent need for a formal, one-off review of staffing issues in further education, including pay and conditions. Such a review should be conducted by an independent, government-nominated chair, and present its recommendations to the government.

The benefits of a coherent and unified system of post-16 education and training

- a central funding body operating a common methodology;
- increased accountability and democracy;
- strategic planning with co-operation and collaboration between all the stakeholders;
- an end to duplication and waste in post-16 education and training;
- a single data collection system that would greatly facilitate planning;
- a single funding system that would assist transparency and accountability, and be equitable and fair;
- a single inspection and quality assurance system that would reduce compliance costs and produce more comparable and useful assessments;
- a sense of fairness and ownership from the staff delivering lifelong learning because their contribution was fully recognised;
- a statutory system of workplace learning that ended the system of voluntarism and equalised the costs of training between employers;
- an entitlement to education and training to Level 3 for young people and adults, and an entitlement to paid educational leave.

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